

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN RURAL AREAS OF RUSSIA AND AUSTRALIA

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**ABSTRACT.** The problem of domestic violence has become one of the most urgent problems of modern social practices, namely, its study, fight against all forms of using violence, prevention of domestic violence, social stigmatization. In connection with the actuality of the problem, it has appeared the necessity of working out complex program of prevention of domestic violence and giving help to victims of domestic violence. The success of prevention of domestic violence directly depends on how deeply the society recognizes the problem of domestic violence, social stigmatization, its sequences.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of domestic violence has become one of the most urgent problems of modern social practices, namely, its study, fight against all forms of using violence, prevention of domestic violence. In Russia, domestic violence has spread wider and wider. Persons, killed or injured on grounds of everyday conflicts, are fixedly placed first among various categories of injured in violent crimes: 70-80% of serious violent crimes, including 30-40% of murders, are committed in the family. Furthermore, women and children make up 70% of the victims of violence. Annually, 10000-14000 women are killed by their husbands or lovers (Bulletin of the Informational Centre of the Independent Women's Forum, 1997), 2000000 children experience physical violence, and 5000 children leave their houses owing to cruel treatment. Furthermore, every second child never returns home (Father, Mother, Me – a Cruel Family, 2006). In accordance with the statistical data of the Ministry of Inner Affairs, domestic violence takes place in every fourth Russian family (Regional Social Organization "Anna", 2006).

### 2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a result of deeper penetration of violence into family life, its morality declines, relation and succession of generations, as well as humanism of family upbringing, become weaker, children's homelessness arises, children are drawn in drinking alcohol, taking drugs, they are drawn in prostitution and criminal activity. A. Fromm states in his theory of people's destructivity that "cruelty ruins soul and body, and the very life; it ruins not only the victim, but the tormentor himself." (1992, p. 28)

The juridical field of defense of the person against violence is formed by laws of the Russian Federation: the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the Criminal, Civil, Administrative, Family Codes of the Russian Federation. According to the Criminal Code, the crimes against the person, connected with domestic violence are as follows: murder, reducing to suicide, beating, torture, insulting, violation, acts of sexual violence, compulsion to have sexual relations, sexual relations and other sexual acts with the person, who has not reached the age of 16, debauched actions, hooliganism, drawing in prostitution.

There exist researches, representing juridical reflection on violence as the field of applying the law. For instance, the researches "Violence, Aggression, Cruelty: Criminal-psychological

Research”, conducted by the Russian Scientific Research Institution (Violence, Aggression, Cruelty: Criminal-psychological Research, 1995) and S. N. Abeltseva “Social Determinants of Criminal Violence and Criminalization of Family Relations” (2000, p. 21-27).

In Russian science, researches on the problem of domestic violence started to be conducted in the 90<sup>th</sup> XX c, but they were done not giving consideration to domestic violence in rural areas. There appeared Russian scientific literature, representing various aspects of the problem, risen in the given article: cruelty, aggression, violence, cruel treatment, victim behaviour. These phenomena were considered in relation to the members of the family, who were weaker, in some respects, than concrete categories: children, disabled persons, old people, women.

Ethnographic and gender aspects of domestic violence in Russian history have been most fully described in the researches of Russian scientists N. A. Berdjajev (1990), N. L. Pushkareva (1987), E. I. Gapova (2001), I. R. Chikalova (2001).

Lately, researches, representing social expertise on the present situation of violence against women have appeared. Here belong the researches of A. Martynova “Woman and Violence” (1993), A. A. Gorbunova “Violence in Russian Family: Problems and Consequences” (1999). In the research “Peasants’ Voices: the Rural Russia of XX c. in the Peasants’ Memoirs” (1993), the results of the Russian-British Sociological Project of 1900-1993 “Social Structure of Russian Countryside”, conducted under the supervision of T. Shanin are published. The book represents oral life-stories, told by rural families from different regions of Russia. The research of T. U. Zabelina “Russia: Violence in the Family – Violence in the Society” (2002) represents qualitative and quantitative results of the poll on violence against women in their families, at place of work, study, are published. The research was conducted in 2001-2002 within the limits of the informational campaign “UNIFAM” for defense of women’s rights “Life without Violence”.

In spite of the fact, that the image of the Russian rural family as a zone of domestic violence is not represented quite well in Russian literature, there exist foreign scientists’ researches, reflecting historical aspects of the problem and perspectives of its solution. They are as follows: J.V. Brown «Female Sexuality and Madness in Russian Culture: Traditional Values and Psychiatric Theory» (1986); D. Ransel «Mothers of Mystery: Child Abandonment in Russia» (1988); J. Hubbs «Mother Russia: The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture» (1988); B. Clemens, B. Engel, C. Worobec «Russia’s Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation», (1991) and others.

It is clear from the mentioned list of the researches, that the task of analysing the socio-cultural context of consciousness of people, especially women, living in rural areas in Russia, as a subject of law regulation, has not been set yet. As for researches, directly devoted to the problems of domestic violence in rural areas, especially reflecting such phenomenon as historico-ethnographical socio-cultural and gender problem, there are no such researches, written by Russian scientists at all.

In our opinion, validity of existing of three groups of theories in Russian science is confirmed. These groups of theories are as follows:

1) interpersonal, based on the role of alcohol and drugs as the factors, accelerating abuse in relations;

2) socio-psychological, which concentrate attention on modelling the roles, assimilated under the influence of domestic violence;

3) socio-cultural, based on the influence of social factors on the violence between partners.

Scientists interpret the nature of domestic violence quite differently. For instance, the research, conducted by I. Gorshkova and I. Shurygina, in 2003, was turned into direction of the study of society’s reaction to the physical violence against wives. Almost half of questioned people consider, that “if husband beats his wife, it is their own business, and other people should not interfere, in what does not concern them. What brings together people of different sex, age, from different regions, is the answer to the question: “Who do you think woman should turn to, if she is beaten by her husband?” Almost 30% of questioned people, belonging to different positions (police, psychologist, crisis centre, relatives, friends, etc.) have chosen the answer: “She is better to think

about it herself, in order to understand, what is her fault.” (Review of the round table Society and Domestic Violence, 2003).

In A. Parshina’s opinion, claims, that it is woman, who provokes violence, are quite demonstrative – it is a very comfortable myth, supported by the society itself. The idea, that it is woman, who provokes violence, leads us to the postulate of closeness of the family. Constant displays of hierarchal relations, in a rude physical form including, is recognized as a permissible way of resolving emergent conflicts in the name of preserving patriarchal order (Review of the round table Society and Domestic Violence, 2003).

T. A. Klimenkova, studying women’s rights in Russia, has come to the conclusion, that it is patriarchal type of culture, that oppresses woman much more, than man (1998, p.144-189). Thus, gradual changes of the problem of discourse have taken place: transition from its purely psychological perception to wider socio-cultural aspect. Gradually, the thesis, that violence against woman is the result of showing “natural and uncontrollable man’s aggression”, quite often “sexual passion”, has gotten out of researches (Klimenkova, 1998, p. 144-189).

V. M. Bondarovskaja, director of the International Humanitarian Centre “Rozrada”, has noted, that there is much violence in both low- and high-income families, no matter what social status they have. As regards village-dwellers, the following is typical of them: “On the one hand, the peasantry carries on customs and traditions, and treats the woman with great respect” (Violence against Woman – Barbarity or Tradition, 2006). “On the other hand, violence against rural woman is clearly expressed in discrimination against her at work. For instance, milkmaids must get up at 4 A.M. and go to the farm on foot, and it occurs to nobody that they can be taken to the farm; women are forced to work as tractor-drivers; while women, stooped down over beds, doing their job, a brigadier stands and supervises – in this respect, violence against rural woman has taken place until the present. That is, hard work, duties, connected with giving orders, is only for men; work on the garden plot, doing the housework, work, connected with using out-of-date technologies, is only for women. It is all these backward, lasting though many centuries customs, that enslave woman (Violence against Woman – Barbarity or Tradition, 2006). The demonstrative situation has arisen in Stavropol countries and villages. There, displays of patriarchal ideas are so great, that no demands are made on man at all. He can not work and say that he is too lazy to do something now, because it is winter and cold (Review of the round table Society and Domestic Violence, 2003).

N. P. Zolotova, a member of the Social Committee under the Chairmanship of the Federation Council for Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women in Russia, has expressed confidence, that new gender strategies, for dealing with the position of woman in the family including, have started to be worked out and realized (Review of the round table Society and Domestic Violence, 2003). Though it is much more difficult to achieve changes in rural areas, in comparison with urban, owing to its specificity.

Rural population in Russia, making up 30% of the whole population of the country, lives traditionally under such conditions, which differ widely from urban living conditions, and which have a lot of influence on the higher rate of domestic violence. It is a lower level of social life, including organization of social work; poor working and living conditions; undeveloped social infrastructure (bad roads, lack of reliable sources of connection, insufficient quality of educational institutions, institutions of health protection and culture); insufficiency of material resources; poor conditions of the essential services, in comparison with urban areas; isolation and territorial remoteness (villages on the vast area of Russia are often situated at a long distance from one another); a lower educational level of village-dwellers, in comparison with town- and city-dwellers (it leads to less favorable position of rural community in the process of social development); conservatism and social inertness (rural population is less mobile, than urban, much more patriarchal); lack of confidentiality and insufficient anonymity, caused by the fact, that everybody knows everything about everybody in a village; a higher level of unemployment, in comparison with urban areas.

Thus, the specificity of problems of domestic violence in rural areas is caused by the following factors:

- value orientations, psychology, a certain conservatism of village-dwellers;
- poor social living and working conditions, and difficulties, caused by these problems;
- rural social environment, distinguishing characteristics of which, unlike urban one, are close neighbor's relations, preserved traditions of communal relationships, which do not allow to promulgate facts of violence to anyone, including the police.

Collaborators of the Altaj Regional Crisis Centre for Women in partnership with NCP "Women's Alliance", carrying out the programme "16 Days Against Violence" have noted that "inclination to violence is not inherited, it is not determined genetically, but children, living in the families, where violence rules, even if they are not exposed to violence directly, in 80-90% of cases, unfortunately, copy the model of behavior of their parents, and transfer it their future partner- and family relations (Father, Mother, Me – a Cruel Family, 2006). The data from the researches, conducted by T. P. Durasanova and O. A. Volkova in a little Russian town of Saratov region in 2002 (2003, p.295-301), confirm that domestic violence has negative influence on children's adaptation and socialization. In Russian families, children get mainly patriarchal upbringing, and in consequence of it, they perceive many things as norm. Violence takes place especially often in case, wife and children are financially dependent (Violence against Woman – Barbarity or Tradition, 2006). Analyzing the data, represented in the table below (In the Face of Violence, 2006), it should be noted, that rural women are much more often convinced, that it has become much more difficult to guard themselves against violence for last 10 years ( under conditions of socio-economical crisis). Thus, 79,3% of rural women consider, that it has become more difficult to guard themselves against violence, and just 19% of them are of opinion, that nothing has changed (In the Face of Violence, 2006).

**Opinions of women from different types of areas of how much the possibilities of guarding themselves against violence have changed for last 10 years, %**

The type of area	To guard oneself against violence		
	Has become easier	Has become more difficult	Nothing has changed
Megalopolis	1,5	69,9	28,7
City	1,7	69,7	28,6
Town	1,6	69,1	29,3
Village	1,1	79,3	19,5

The figures are greatly conditioned by the fact, that it is towns and villages, where violence against close relatives is spread much wider than in cities. More than that, the rate of violence has started increasing, since the rate of living conditions in rural areas has started decreasing. Thus, 31,7% of towns-dwellers and 25% of villages-dwellers have reported about acts of domestic violence against them. As for megalopolises-dwellers, it is literally several of them, who have reported about acts of violence. 76,8% of all the questioned women consider themselves to be undefended in juridical respect. It is just a quarter of the questioned women, who consider themselves to be defended (In the Face of Violence, 2006). As we can see, everyday violence has been, and apparently remains to be an attribute of life, first of al in rural Russia. The main victims of violence are women from the most unfavorable layers, from the point of view of both their financial situation and educational level. It is not just the fact of existing of domestic violence in Russian families, that appears to be a most serious problem for contemporary Russian reality, but the fact, that many women do not see any opportunity to guard themselves from being beaten.

A serious research, devoted to problems of domestic violence in rural communities of South Australia, have been conducted by S. Wendt and B. Cheers. The particular research is given below.

Due to the hidden nature of domestic violence in rural areas of Australia (Alston, 1997; Wendt & Cheers, 2002), it is difficult to know the true extent of the problem. Available data indicate that there is a higher reported rate of domestic violence in rural and remote places than in urban areas (Women's Services Network (WESNET), 2000). For instance, national data from the Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program collected in 1997-98, reveal that the domestic violence rate in metropolitan areas was 2.32 per 1000 population compared with rates of 6.11 in large rural centres, 3.23 in other rural areas, and 9.85 in remote areas (WESNET, 2000, p.4). However, the differences could be larger than these figures indicate. Some studies have shown that violence is less likely to be reported to police in rural than urban settings and that informal social control and sanctions against reporting are more prevalent. Moreover, rural service providers have reported abundant evidence of serious levels of domestic, sexual, and other kinds of community violence in many rural areas, most instances of which go unreported (Coorey, 1990, 1992; Alston, 1997; Hoggs & Carrington, 1998; Wendt & Cheers, 2002).

In Australia, much research has been conducted on the nature, effects, and dynamics of domestic violence (Scutt, 1990; Hopkins & McGregor, 1991; Horsfall, 1991; Victory, 1993; Family Violence Professional Education Taskforce (FVPET), 1994; Bagshaw & Chung, 2000; Bagshaw, Chung, Couch, Liburn & Wadham, 2000; Chung, Kennedy O'Brien & Wendt, 2000). However, only a few studies have been conducted in rural contexts. These have focused predominantly upon aspects of rural life and the barriers that keep rural women trapped in violent relationships. Nolan (1992, p.20) states that:

...some aspects of rural life may, in fact, make women more vulnerable to domestic violence. The same factors present domestic violence victims with real difficulties, indeed in some cases, seemingly insurmountable barriers, to obtaining assistance to end the violence.

Australian studies, such as those in rural New South Wales (Samyia, 1987; Coorey, 1990, 1992; Alston, 1997; Davis, Taylor & Furniss, 2001), rural Queensland (Nolan, 1992), and rural South Australia (Lovell, 1996; Bagshaw et al, 2000), have found that rural community factors impact on rural women experiencing domestic violence, making them especially vulnerable and contributing to its continuation. These include financial insecurity, distance from larger population centres, isolation, lack of services and information, and limited police and legal protection. Researchers have argued that these impact on rural women differently than they do on urban women and cannot be ignored when considering appropriate responses.

For instance, many rural women report financial dependency and not knowing how to access social security payments as barriers to leaving violent relationships (Coorey, 1992; Bagshaw et al., 2000, p.88). Specifically, researchers have pointed out that financial dependency makes it especially difficult for women living on properties to leave abusive situations because financial resources are often tied up in farming businesses so that there is little cash on hand. Women also report pressures not to break up family properties or force property settlements (Coorey, 1992; Nolan, 1992; Bagshaw et al., 2000). Perceived lack of confidentiality and anonymity, stigma attached to public disclosure of violence, and gossip networks have also been found to contribute to women's decisions not to access the limited services, information, and resources available to them (Samyia, 1987; Coorey, 1990, 1992; Nolan 1992; Lovell, 1996; Alston, 1997). Furthermore, physical distance and isolation compound women's difficulties in accessing services and leaving violent situations, and public transport is often limited in rural and remote areas (Samyia, 1987; Coorey, 1990; Lovell, 1996) Finally, limited or no assistance from the police and the legal justice system is also a contributing factor to rural women's vulnerability in domestic violence situations. Rural police work happens under a different set of constraints compared to metropolitan policing. Police often work in isolation and small stations may be under-resourced, leading to long delays in responding to women's requests for assistance (Knowles, 1996, p.i; Lovell, 1996, p.47; Alston, 1997, p.19, p.20). Furthermore, in rural areas there may be a general tolerance for, or lenience towards, domestic violence as police frequently have personal relationships with many community members, including men who are perpetrators. This makes it difficult for them to be objective when

responding to domestic violence situations (Coorey, 1990, p.3; Coorey, 1992, p.26; Knowles, 1996, p.151; Nicholson, 1996, p.8, p.15).

Researchers and commentators generally agree that there is virtually no research relating to violence on farm properties as distinct from violence in rural townships (Hoggs & Carrington, 2003). Acknowledgement of the high incidence of violence against women in rural and remote communities is evident in the literature resulting in frequent recommendations for more research. For example, the conference *Setting the Agenda for Rural Women: Research Directions* held in Wagga Wagga in 2002 recommended that:

... research be conducted on the impact of divorce or separation on family-owned farms and their relationship to violence against women, and that the inhibitors to reporting violence against women be identified (O'Hagan, Alston & Spriggs, 2003, p.19).

More recently, Australian researchers have started to recognise and explore culture in rural communities, arguing that placing domestic violence within the context in which it occurs enables an analysis of its complexities, the different forms it takes, and the varied meanings attributed to it (Wendt, Taylor & Kennedy, 2002). This move towards recognising culture in particular places has been influenced by poststructural approaches, which argue that there are many rural contexts and that particular places have multiple meanings and identities for those who live in them. This perspective has critiqued, and moved away from, the view that rural communities are homogenous and have overarching similarities. In particular, feminist poststructural approaches to domestic violence research have turned to understanding which cultures and identities are dominant in different rural contexts and how this dominance is achieved in particular places at particular times (Wendt et al, 2002). This provides the opportunity to understand how rural contexts, including rural communities and their cultures impact on rural women's experiences, and men's perpetration, of domestic violence.

For instance, a recent study by Wendt (1999, 2005) in South Australia explored impacts of a local culture on domestic violence in a particular rural community. The study found that conventional religious values and beliefs about the nuclear family and the sacrament of marriage were strong, and that farming women valued family property and inheritance. Furthermore, these beliefs impacted on women's decisions to remain longer in violent relationships than they wanted to and they experienced difficulty finding help to change their situations. From this study, Wendt and Cheers (2002, p.22) concluded that:

Components of their local rural cultures that they identified as impacting on their experiences of domestic violence included belief in the sanctity and permanence of marriage, the importance of privacy of the nuclear family, Christian doctrine, and preservation of intergenerational property transfer. Each woman's story showed that while rural culture gave them strength to endure the violence it also created internal conflicts between wanting to escape and the cultural beliefs and values that they had internalised.

In Australia, research is starting to explore how domestic violence is interpreted and experienced in rural communities and how local values, beliefs, and familiar and valued ways of life impact on rural people and their experiences of domestic violence (Hoggs and Carrington, 1998, 2003; Wendt & Cheers, 2002).

In conclusion, in Australia domestic violence rates are higher in rural communities than in urban locations, although establishing the accuracy of such comparisons is extremely difficult because domestic violence is more likely to be unnamed and hidden in rural communities. Further, Australian research has validated the reality that in relation to issues of domestic violence life in rural Australia and the needs of rural Australians differ from those of urban Australians. Rural women face different factors in their environments when confronting domestic violence (Wendt et al, 2002, p.30). Recent research into domestic violence in rural communities in Australia has moved towards recognising and acknowledging local community contexts and differences between experiences in different places. This emphasis on particular contexts allows rural people to talk about their own experiences of domestic violence and define their local situations, which is important when trying to find community-owned local solutions to domestic violence. Research has

only just begun in Australia on acknowledging domestic violence as being understood in particular historical, social, cultural, and community contexts as constructed by those who live them (Cheers, Binell, Coleman, Gentle, Miller, Taylor, & Weetra, 2006).

### 3. CONCLUSION

Summing up the conducted researches, it should be noted, that in spite of specificity of the two countries – Russia and Australia, the problems of domestic violence in both of them have much in common:

- peculiarities of geographical situations of Russia and Australia, namely, middle situation between different civilizations, spatial characteristics of “distance” and “open space” as attributes of Russian and Australian mentality;
- a higher rate of domestic violence in remote and rural places of Russia and Australia, rather than in urban areas, as patriarchal type of culture has been better preserved in rural communities, than in urban environment;
- socio-cultural practices, demanding from countryside-dwellers both in Russia and Australia to conceal family problems, preserve a certain closeness;
- inadequate defense of potential and real victims of domestic violence by legal justice system, limited assistance from the police;
- elementary juridical illiteracy of countryside-dwellers, connected with their lower educational level, in comparison with towns- or cities-dwellers;
- victim's financial dependence from the subject of violence (in Russia, it is often a housing problem, in Australia – problems of joint property); this very discourse has been studied by scientists and practices of social work least of all.

In connection with the actuality of the problem, it has appeared the necessity of working out complex national programmes of prevention of domestic violence and giving help to victims of domestic violence. The programmes should include both measures to create mechanisms for socio-juridical defense and measures to work with public opinion. They imply preventive activity, social supporting of the family, drawing the family to rehabilitation programmes, giving the family everything necessary for overcoming a crisis situation and subsequent development of the family. Members of the family are to be prevented from violence with help of system of measures, providing them with social, psychological, juridical, etc. help; social rehabilitation of members of the family; giving the family everything necessary for resolving conflict situations, establishing of control over behaviour of the members of the family, who have resorted to domestic violence; providing victims of violence with a shelter (Republican Programme “Prevention of Domestic Violence, 2003).

The success of prevention of domestic violence directly depends on how deeply the society recognizes the problem of domestic violence, its sequences, which are expressed first of all in social trouble of children and teenagers, deterioration of women's and children's health, deterioration of capacity for work.

The existing crisis has been scaled up to the level of the crisis of the very structures of society. Consequently, it is inner, gender system of society, oriented on the mechanisms of violence, that should be changed in the present situation.

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